

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 IO-10 SAM-01 SAB-01 AID-05

OMB-01 ACDA-05 /083 W

----- 118854

O R 131238Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6651

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 2904

E O 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, XF, IS, EG, US

SUBJECT: LABOR ALIGNMENT BEGINS DEBATE ON EBAN

CRITICISM OF GOI FOREIGN POLICY

1. SUMMARY: SINCE RETURNING FROM US SEVERAL WEEKS AGO, FORMER FONMIN ABBA EBAN HAS LAUNCHED CAMPAIGN AGAINST GOI FOREIGN POLICY LINE, PARTICULARLY AS REGARDS RECENTLY SUSPENDED NEGOTIATIONS, AND HAS ALSO ATTACKED RABIN FOR FAILING TO PROVIDE NECESSARY LEADERSHIP TO RULING LABOR PARTY (TEL AVIV 2722). EBAN'S MAARIV INTERVIEW MAY 9 (FBIS T.A. 101225Z MAY 75 ET AL.) AS WELL AS HIS STATEMENTS IN LAST SEVERAL DAYS ON RADIO AND AT HAIFA MUNICIPALITY HAVE PROVOKED SERIES OF REACTIONS AND COUNTER-REACTIONS, STARTING WITH SHARP REBUKES BY RABIN, SECRETARY GENERAL ZARMI AND OTHER SENIOR LABOR PARTY
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PERSONALITIES, FOLLOWED BY WARNINGS FROM MAPAM AND LABOR PARTY'S LEFT WING AGAINST TRANSFORMATION OF LEGITIMATE POLITICAL DEBATE INTO PERSONAL VENDETTA. LABOR ALIGNMENT KNESSET FACTION AND ALIGNMENT

WILL HOLD POLITICAL DEBATE EVENING OF MAY 13 FOCUS OF WHICH INEVITABLY WILL BE EBAN CRITICISM OF GOI POLICY RE EGYPTIAN/ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. EBAN'S MAY 9 MAARIV INTERVIEW CONSTITUTES HARDEST PUBLIC ATTACK YET BY PROMINENT ISRAELI PERSONALITY AGAINST GOI POSITION IN RECENT EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS. EBAN HAS CHARGED GOI WITH COMMITTING SERIES OF FUNDAMENTAL MISTAKES INCLUDING: A) ACCEPTANCE OF STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH RATHER THAN FORMULATION OF OVERALL PEACE PROPOSAL B) UNWARRANTED EXPECTATION THAT EGYPT COULD MAKE SEPARATE POLITICAL AGREEMENT WITH ISRAEL: C) INSISTENCE ON GOE NON-BELLIGERENCY DECLARATION AS QUID-PRO-QUO FOR PARTIAL WITHDRAWAL IN SINAI ALTHOUGH IT WAS CLEAR FROM OUTSET THAT SADAT COULD NOT AGREE TO THIS: AND D) REJECTION OF AGREEMENT ON TERMS PROPOSED VIA SECRETARY. EBAN ARGUED THAT GOI, ONCE IT HAD DECIDED TO PURSUE INTERIM GOE/GOI AGREEMENT, SHOULD HAVE ACCEPTED EGYPTIAN TERMS, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS "BAD AGREEMENT", WITH COMPENSATION IN FORM OF STRENGTHENED PARTNERSHIP WITH USG AND ADDITIONAL AMERICAN COMMITMENTS TO ISRAEL. EBAN FURTHER CHARGED CURRENT GOI LEADERSHIP WITH FAILURE SO FAR TO COME UP WITH NEW CONSTRUCTIVE IDEAS EITHER FOR RENEWAL OF NEGOTIATIONS FOR INTERIM ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN AGREEMENT OR FOR FORMULATION OF OVERALL ISRAELI PEACE PROPOSAL, SETTING STAGE FOR REPLY OF MARCH FIASCO. WITHOUT SOME NEW APPROACH, EBAN ARGUED, IT WOULD REMAIN IMPOSSIBLE FOR ISRAEL TO REPAIR RELATIONS WITH USG.

3. SPEAKING AT HAIFA MUNICIPALITY MAY 11, EBAN IN BLUNT ATTACK DESCRIBED LABOR PARTY AS DRIFTING SHIP "WITHOUT COMPASS OR CONFIDENTIAL

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ANCHOR, AND IN TROUBLE OVER THE DIRECTION OF ITS RUDDER". PARTY FORUMS WERE IN ABEYANCE, UNINVOLVED IN DEBATE OVER KEY FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES CONFRONTING ISRAEL. EBAN ALSO EXPRESSED HIS ASTONISHMENT OVER LABOR PARTY LEADERSHIP'S APPARENT INDIFFERENCE TO RESIGNATION OF LYOVA ELIAV AND DOVISH IDEOLOGICAL GROUP "LIBUN" TO JOIN NEW CENTER-LEFT POLITICAL MOVEMENT YA-AD (TEL AVIV 2790) AND CHALLENGED LABOR PARTY TO GIVE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION TO IMPLICATIONS OF THESE DEPARTURES BEFORE THERE WERE FURTHER DEFECTIONS.

4. WAVE OF REACTION AND COUNTER-REACTION TO

EBAN CHALLENGE BEGAN WITH COMMENT ON ISRAEL
RADIO MAY 11 BY LABOR PARTY SEC GEN
ZARMI WHO SAID THAT EBAN INTERVIEW DID NOT TALLY
WITH SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY EXPECTED OF SOMEONE
OF HIS STATURE. ZARMI NOTED THAT EBAN HAD DE-
CLINED SPEAK AT LABOR PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE
MEETING MARCH 25 WHICH HAD ENDORSED GOI'S STAND IN
NEGOTIATIONS. HE BELIEVED EBAN'S REMARKS HAD
IMPAIRED LABOR PARTY'S TEXTURE OF SOLIDARITY".

5. PRIMIN RABIN ON ISRAELI TV MAY 12,
WITHOUT MENTIONING EBAN BY NAME, CHARACTERIZED
HIS RECENT STATEMENTS AS "IRRESPONSIBLE--EVEN
THOUGH THEY WERE MADE BY A MAN WHO FORMERLY
HELD RESPONSIBLE OFFICE", ADDING THAT SUCH STATE-
MENTS HURT ISRAEL'S IMAGE IN US AND IN ARAB
WORLD. RABIN ALSO SAID THAT "CERTAIN PERSONS"
HAD GIVEN "EXAGGERATED EXPRESSION" TO CURRENT
STATE OF TENSIONS IN US/ISRAELI RELATIONS. HE
NOTED THAT ONLY ONE AREA OF US/ISRAEL RELATIONS
HAD BEEN AFFECTED SO FAR BY REASSESSMENT,
NAMELY NEGOTIATION OF NEW ARMS CONTRACTS, AND
THAT US ARMS RESUPPLY UNDER EXISTING CONTRACTS
WAS CONTINUING ON NORMAL COURSE. RABIN ENDED
HIS BRIEF COMMENTS BY REPEATING HIS CONVICTION
RE CORRECTNESS OF GOI DECISIONS AND BY NOTING THAT
IF ISRAEL STOOD FIRM AND MADE EFFORT TO WIN SUPPORT IN US,
CURRENT US/ISRAEL TENSIONS WOULD BE OVERCOME.
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TEL AVIV 2904

6. DOVISH ELEMENTS OF LABOR ALIGNMENT HAVE COME TO EBAN'S DEFENSE IN ADVANCE OF TONIGHT'S POLITICAL DEBATE IN KNESSET FACTION AND EXECUTIVE. (IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THESE INDIVIDUALS ARE NOT IN "EBAN CAMP" AS SUCH, NOR ARE THEY TRYING TO PROMOTE EBAN AS CANDIDATE TO REPLACE RABIN; THEY ARE CONCERNED HOWEVER THAT GOI COME UP WITH NEW NEGOTIATING INITIATIVE.) ALIGNMENT DOVES HAVE CHARACTERIZED ZARMI'S ATTACK ON EBAN AS "WITHOUT PRECEDENT IN ITS SEVERITY." MAPAM MK DOV ZAKIN HAS WARNED AGAINST CREATING AN ISRAELI DREYFUS AFFAIR, WHILE LABOR MK YOSI SARID HAS CHARACTERIZED ZARMI'S CHARGE AS RIDICULOUS IN VIEW OF FACT, AS HE PUT IT, THAT LABOR ALIGNMENT HAS NOT HELD SERIOUS POLITICAL DEBATE ON FOREIGN POLICY FOR LAST THREE YEARS. EBAN HAS ALSO DEFENDED HIMSELF, STATING THAT DUTY OF ANY LABOR PARTY MK IS NOT TO APPLAUD OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS BUT TO CONFIDENTIAL

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EXPRESS HIS FREE INDEPENDENT AND HONEST OPINION IN NATIONAL DEBATE " AT TIME OF CRISIS AND LOSS OF DIRECTION."

7. INITIAL REACTIONS INDICATED THAT RABIN WILL FIND STRONG BACKING IN TONIGHT'S DEBATE. ONE MODERATE LABOR PARTY MK, WHOSE VIEWS ARE FAIRLY MAINSTREAM, TOLD US THAT EBAN'S ATTACK ON GOI POLICY LINE WAS EXAGGERATED. EBAN'S CRITICISM IS INTERPRETED HERE AS REFLECTION OF VIEW EXPRESSED BY SECRETARY AND ALSO AS JUSTIFICATION OF EGYPTIAN STAND IN REJECTION OF GOI DEMANDS. LATTER POINT IN PARTICULAR STICKS IN CRAW OF MANY PEOPLE. PERSUASIVENESS OF EBAN'S ARGUMENTATION IS ALSO AFFECTED BY FACT THAT HE IS NOT EXACTLY DISINTERESTED PARTY, AND PERSONAL CONSIDERATIONS APPEAR TO PLAY SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN CURRENT DEBATE. MOST ISRAELI COMMENTATORS LOOK ON EBAN AS DEEPLY FRUSTRATED POLITICIAN, WHOSE INTERNATIONAL IMAGE AND DOMESTIC STANDING ARE IN SHARP CONTRAST TO EACH OTHER. HIS ATTACK ON RABIN SEEN HERE AGAINST BACKGROUND OF LONGSTANDING TENSE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO AND HIS RESENTMENT AT UNCEREMONIOUS PRECIPITATE MANNER IN WHICH HE WAS DROPPED FROM THE FOREIGN MINISTRY LAST MAY. IN SUM, EBAN'S MOTIVES ARE MIXED; IN ADDITION TO TRYING TO FORCE GOI TO EXAMINE NEW APPROACH TO NEGOTIATIONS HE IS ALSO TRYING TO

BUILD HIS POSITION AS ALTERNATIVE TO RABIN IN
CASE THE ROOF, ONE DAY, DOES INDEED FALL IN.
TONIGHT'S DEBATE IN ANY CASE SHOULD PROVIDE GOOD
LITMUS TEST FOR ISRAELI POLITICAL CLIMATE.
VELIOTES

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